



Senate Bill 985

Economic Development - County or Municipality Economic Development Authority - Powers and Use of Proceeds

MACo Position: **SUPPORT**

To: Budget and Taxation Committee

WITH AMENDMENTS

Date: February 21, 2024

From: Dominic J. Butchko

The Maryland Association of Counties (MACo) **SUPPORTS SB 985 WITH AMENDMENTS**. This bill expands the scope of certain economic and industrial development authorities established by county governments.

For the 2024 Maryland General Assembly Session, MACo has made it a priority – one of the Association’s four legislative initiatives – to *Advance Comprehensive Housing Solutions*. Much like climate change and sea level rise, the challenges surrounding affordable housing are vast and call for a large, multipronged effort. While in other policy areas, it may be easy to deduce a simple cause-and-effect relationship, housing is a complex web of multifaceted factors. Addressing challenges like workforce, financing, interest rates, broad economic trends, supply chain, and large out-of-state corporate interests – among many other obstacles – requires an all-hands-on-deck effort from policy makers at all levels.

MACo is working with sponsors to cross-file legislation to target several components of this crisis: abandonment/blight disincentives, corporate owner transparency, and short-term rental oversight. Additionally, under this initiative, counties will be supporting other pro-housing legislation which helps to advance the conversation, balances local flexibility, and ensures more Marylanders can afford a place to call home.

Counties recognize and support the intent of SB 985 and are keenly interested in partnership and being proactive stakeholders around affordable housing issues more globally. Counties offer the following amendment, which we believe to be friendly, to buttress a county’s oversight and auditing authority over the economic and industrial development authorities:

- On page 2, in line 26, insert: “THE GOVERNING BODY OF A COUNTY OR MUNICIPALITY SHALL HAVE FULL AUDITING AND OVERSIGHT AUTHORITY OVER AN ESTABLISHED AUTHORITY.”

With this amendment, SB 985 would become another tool in the toolbox in the fight to bring more affordable housing to our mutual constituents. For this reason, MACo urges the Committee to give SB 985 a report of **FAVORABLE WITH AMENDMENTS**.